

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
CORPUS CHRISTI DIVISION

M.D., b/n/f Sarah R. Stukenberg, et al., §
§
Plaintiffs, §
v. §
§ GREG ABBOTT, in his official capacity as § Civil Action No. 2:11-CV-00084
Governor of the State of Texas, et al., §
§
Defendants. §

Court Monitors' Update to the Court Regarding The Refuge

The Court held a hearing on March 10, 2022 to discuss a report by the Department of Family and Protective Services (“DFPS”) to the Court’s Monitors earlier in the day disclosing “an urgent situation involving The Refuge for DMST (“The Refuge”), a residential operation located in Bastrop, Texas that serves female victims of commercial sex trafficking between the ages of 11-17.”¹ The Department wrote:

As of 3.4.22, 11 youth were placed there – six through DFPS child-specific contracts, three through OCOK, one through ICPC (out of state) and one through private pay (parental placement).

During an almost six-week period beginning on 1.24.22, DFPS received multiple intakes alleging SXAB, NSUP, PHAB, EXPC and MDNG at this operation. Among them, on 1.24.22, a current Refuge employee contacted Statewide Intake alleging NSUP and SXAB of two youth by a former Refuge employee. Specifically, the reporter alleged that while employed at the operation, the former employee sold nude photos of two youth in care, using the proceeds to purchase illegal drugs and alcohol which were supplied to the youth. Because the intake involved alleged human trafficking, local law enforcement and the Texas Department of Public Safety were immediately notified and a CPI Special Investigator was assigned to the case. Between 1.24.22 and 3.4.22, Statewide Intake received eight intakes, all alleging human trafficking by the former employee. However, during the

¹ See Letter The Refuge, ECF No. 1195.

investigative process, RCCI discovered several additional staff still employed at the operation appeared to be involved, and that many of them were related to one another by blood or marriage and/or were cohabiting.²

DFPS reported that “[b]y mid-afternoon on 3.9.22, all youth in DFPS care were removed; eight of the 9 have already been placed in other less restrictive placements that specialize in serving victims of commercial sex trafficking.”³ The Court ordered DFPS to provide information to the Monitors by 12:00 p.m. on March 11, 2022, detailing the medical and mental health services provided to the children following the January 24, 2022 allegations of human trafficking.

DFPS provided the Monitors with a summary of medical and mental health services provided to six children directly placed by DFPS at The Refuge. The Department reported that the agency may “identify additional responsive information/documents,” and, if so, “will immediately share any additional information/documents with” the Court Monitors.

DFPS’s information indicates that one of the six children was treated by a mental health professional since January 24, 2022. Two children have had dental visits since that date; and two children were seen by a medical professional or a medical laboratory. Several of the children changed medications since January 24, 2022, as well.⁴

Our Community Our Kids (OCOK), the Single Source Continuum Contractor for Region 3b, placed three children at The Refuge. DFPS provided the Monitors with information from OCOK that identified one date-specific service for each child – a medical examination scheduled for today.⁵

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Email from Tara Olah, Director of Implementation and Strategy, DFPS, to Kevin Ryan, Monitor, (March 11, 2022) (on file with the Monitors).

⁵ Email from Tara Olah, Director of Implementation and Strategy, DFPS, to Kevin Ryan, Monitor, (March 11, 2022) (on file with the Monitors).